

THE PASSING OF MONOTECHNIC TEACHER EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

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SYNOPSIS

Monotechnic teacher education provision persisted in Scotland long after it had been discarded elsewhere and was officially endorsed as recently as 1986. Despite that, teacher education is now almost fully integrated into the universities. This paper offers an analysis of that change. Its thesis is that three mutually reinforcing influences were at work. Firstly, in marked contrast to its heavily interventionist stance in regard to college closures in the early '80s, the government established a regulated market for higher education, thereby creating the conditions in which institutional collaboration would evolve through negotiation within the policy community itself. Secondly, the colleges of education faced a range of financial and other pressures which made merger with a university an attractive proposition. Thirdly, the recently repatriated universities saw benefits in the establishment of faculties of education, not least as a means of integrating themselves more fully into the educational life of Scotland.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE MONOTECHNIC IN SCOTLAND

The monotechnic provision of teacher education, its location in specialist institutions devoted mainly, if not exclusively, to that purpose, was a significant feature of Scotland's educational tradition. Notwithstanding international evidence that teacher education was integral to the work of universities, and that it could flourish in a wider institutional context - for example, in North America, in Australia, and, nearer home, in England - Scotland persisted with a system of independent colleges of education, which formed a separate sector of higher education operating within a distinctive legal, administrative and financial framework.

Three explanations may be offered for the persistence of the monotechnic in Scotland long after it had been discarded elsewhere. Firstly, the Secretary of State for Scotland was responsible to parliament for the nation's schools and therefore had to control the professional preparation of teachers, a responsibility that could not be discharged if teacher education was based in universities, which were the concern of a minister with a UK-wide remit. Secondly, in an endeavour to avoid the duplication of provision that was thought to characterise the binary system in England and Wales, the Scottish Office was committed to a tripartite system in which universities, central institutions, and colleges of education were functionally differentiated and complementary. Thirdly, as was demonstrated by three major reviews - the Advisory Council Report, *Training of Teachers* (1946), the Robbins Report (1963), and the House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Science Report (1971), each of which permitted a comprehensive sampling of professional opinion - there was a marked consensus in favour of specialist teacher education institutions. On the positive side, it was considered that teacher education should be conducted within institutions that had close links with schools and the teaching profession. More negatively, it was strongly suspected that teacher education was not a degree-worthy study and that, as the Advisory Council Report put it, the incorporation of teacher education within universities "would endanger the fulfilment of their true cultural mission". (SED, 1946)

Given the support the monotechnic arrangement attracted, it was hardly

surprising that, when the over-capacity of the college system became apparent in the mid-70s, there was no question of following the solution adopted in England of merging teacher education colleges with other higher education institutions: the only solution was closure or forced merger and, as was clearly demonstrated in a detailed study, the choice of institutions for closure was made “almost entirely for political reasons”. (Marker, 1994) Indeed, it is precisely because no alternative to the monotechnic arrangement could be contemplated that ministers had recourse, in the face of concerted opposition, to a process of incremental adjustments to the system, which were more calculated to minimise political embarrassment than to promote the strategic development of the sector.

STEAC AND THE MONOTECHNIC PRINCIPLE

The failure to address over-capacity through the first round of closures in 1981 meant that the problem was exacerbated. The questionable viability of the seven-college system was therefore one of the factors which led to the establishment of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council (STEAC) in 1984. The startling announcement of the principal of Aberdeen University, George McNicol, in February 1983, urging a merger of all three higher education institutions in the city, including Aberdeen College of Education, ensured that STEAC’s terms of reference were extended to include “the general principles which should govern relationships between universities and other institutions”. The review, therefore, was certain to provide a further examination of the most appropriate institutional context for teacher education.

It is clear that, in addressing that issue, STEAC was strongly influenced by the degree of support for the monotechnic principle that came from the college of education sector itself, the teachers’ unions, and the college principals, particularly in their oral evidence. It considered that “the peculiar strengths of the colleges of education derive very largely from their single-minded commitment to the teaching profession, which provides a clear focus for their activities, strengthens their sense of purpose, and provides a source of motivation for students”. (SED, 1985) Having undertaken a strategic analysis of higher education in Scotland, STEAC endorsed the monotechnic principle, concluding that “the standard of teacher training in Scotland will, in our view, be best preserved by its concentration in thriving specialist establishments with a common sense of purpose”. However, the Council felt disposed to accept the weight of the evidence on over-capacity and recommended that the number of colleges should be reduced from seven to four.

Following a consultation period which was dominated by the closure issue, the Secretary of State announced to parliament in July 1986 that teacher education “should continue to be provided in specialist institutions”; and that the number of colleges should be reduced from seven to five, while all the existing sites would remain open. The Secretary of State’s decision on teacher education was reinforced by his rejection of the recommendation on an overarching body for the funding and planning of higher education in Scotland in favour of a Scottish Committee of the Universities’ Funding Council, an arrangement which left colleges of education under the control of the Secretary of State for Scotland while the universities retained their accountability to a UK minister.

THE DEMISE OF THE MONOTECHNICS

Despite that recent endorsement of the monotechnic principle, teacher education is now almost fully incorporated within the universities: Craigie College has been incorporated within the University of Paisley (1993); Jordanhill within the University of Strathclyde (1993); Moray House within the University of Edinburgh (1998); St

Andrew's within the University of Glasgow (1999); and discussions are currently taking place which are expected to lead to the incorporation of the Aberdeen campus of Northern College within the University of Aberdeen and the Dundee campus within the University of Dundee in 2000. In little more than a decade, the separate sector of teacher education has all but vanished. What explanation might be offered for this remarkable change in the landscape of higher education in Scotland?

At one level, the explanation might lie in the rationalisation of higher education in advanced industrial societies as a result of which, in the pressure to make educational institutions efficient mechanisms of economic regeneration, traditional boundaries between institutions of higher education and hierarchical distinctions between modes of higher education are blurred. On that analysis, despite an exaggerated respect for established arrangements, Scotland was duly forced to succumb to economically driven pressures which, in the process of transforming higher education, invalidated traditional teacher education arrangements. However, global explanations, not least those seeking to interpret trends in relation to the operation of economic forces, are too coarse: they fail to acknowledge that social and institutional changes need to be viewed through the prism of policy-making processes that are context-specific.

The thesis to be argued here is that, whether or not the eclipse of Scotland's monotronics was economically driven, the explanation for that important development lies in the interplay of forces within and between policy communities. Whereas the contraction of the college of education system from ten to five colleges in the '80s was effected through the direct involvement of SED, in its micro-management of the system in the face of bitter opposition, the flurry of mergers in the '90s were voluntary initiatives by the institutions themselves. The Secretary of State for Scotland accepted the advice offered to him by an official committee that mergers "should normally originate within the institutions concerned".¹ That reflected a key change in government style from the interventionist to the permissive. Significantly, following the re-election of the Conservatives in 1987, the Minister for Education was Michael Forsyth, an evangelical Thatcherite. In line with New Right principles, he sought to establish a system of higher education governed by market forces. He informed principals that, in the "cut throat" context in which they worked, "the fittest colleges will be able to go from strength to strength and the remedy for the others will be in their own hands".² The quality of higher education was thought to be secured by the creation of a highly competitive environment in which institutions would be pressurised to improve their performance: failure to attract students or to excel in research would have direct financial consequences. The task of government on this analysis was not to manage the system but to create the conditions in which institutions managed themselves and succeeded or failed on the basis of their own efforts.

Of course, the market had to some extent to be regulated. For example, the Secretary of State retained the right to approve teacher education programmes and to determine the number of students admitted to training. However, within a broad regulatory framework, the SED left it to institutions themselves to work out their own salvation. While, as part of that framework, mergers would require the approval of the Secretary of State, they did not originate with him: they were the product of negotiation within the policy community. There is no doubt that these negotiations were stimulated by and reflected an intensifying institutional rivalry which encouraged institutions to see merger as a way of maintaining their competitive position. Thus, for example, it was scarcely coincidental that Jordanhill College should make overtures to the University of Glasgow within months of the announcement that Moray House and Heriot-Watt University were exploring a collaborative relationship. Nor was it surprising that the University of Strathclyde

should seize with alacrity the opportunity which Glasgow had passed over when, in what was widely regarded as a remarkable display of short-sightedness, and, despite the pleas of its Professor of Education, Glasgow decided to reject the Jordanhill merger proposal.³

Several other features of the new context made it more rather than less likely that inter-institutional negotiation would take place with a view to building long-term strategic alliances in response to new pressures and new opportunities. These were: the fragility of the STEAC settlement; the institutional instability of the post-STEAC years; the repatriation of the Scottish universities in 1992; intensifying financial pressures; and the belated acknowledgement of the educational benefits accruing to colleges and universities from merger.

THE FRAGILITY OF THE STEAC SETTLEMENT

It has been argued by Kirk (1997) that the STEAC settlement was anything but robust and contained within it the seeds of subsequent institutional unrest and dislocation. Bone (1985) claimed that the monotechnic was “unusual throughout the world”; Cuming referred to “the infirmities of the colleges of education which arise from their academic isolation, over-provision, and excessive costliness”;⁴ and Williams could see “no insurmountable difficulties” in universities providing teacher education “even for Roman Catholic students”.⁵ Variations of these arguments were advanced by many bodies during the STEAC review - by, for example, the CNA, the technological CIs, the Church of Scotland’s Education Committee, COSLA, ADES, the NAS/UWT, and the university departments of education. Such a strong body of contrary opinion clearly suggested that the confidence placed by STEAC in the monotechnic principle might be misplaced.

Secondly, some of the arguments advanced during the STEAC discussion, and subsequently, in favour of the monotechnic principle were unconvincing. For example, members of STEAC must have been well aware that, in other parts of the world, even in England, teacher education was formally integrated into university provision. In addition, the Council objected to the possibility of academic drift, despite the fact that the Secretary of State had the authority to approve teacher education courses and would therefore be in a position to prevent any weakening of the professional dimension in teacher education.

Thirdly, the Secretary of State himself did not appear to be wholly committed to the decisions he was announcing. The statement on 18 July 1986 made it clear that the Minister would “review the position again next year in the light of progress made in dealing with the problem of over-capacity”. Then, while he favoured specialist institutions for teacher education, he disclosed that he did so “in principle, while not ruling out entirely the possibility of some other arrangement if circumstances appeared to warrant it”.⁶

Finally, the STEAC package contained features which, if not completely unworkable, were scarcely conducive to a vigorous college of education sector operating within a national framework. For example, the creation of a single college from two institutions seventy miles apart (Aberdeen and Dundee) was a solution with built-in complications from the outset. In addition, the Scottish Committee of the UFC, a body accountable to the universities, would never be expected to win the support of the non-university sector. On this analysis, then, the STEAC recommendation on the colleges of education was evidence of a powerful committee acquiescing in the rhetoric of the protagonists of the monotechnic principle, notwithstanding strong counter-arguments; and the Secretary of State’s decisions were more an exercise in political calculation than a declaration of a coherent and convincing strategy. The STEAC settlement was therefore unlikely to represent a durable solution to the complex problems which had to be addressed. And so it proved.

CONTINUING INSTABILITY IN THE POST-STEAC YEARS

The intensive public debate, not to mention political trauma, occasioned by the STEAC review, might have been expected to issue in a period of stability in which a slimmer but stronger college of education sector could prosper. On the contrary, a period of significant institutional and sector-wide instability followed. Most obviously, STEAC did not arrest the continuing decline in the demand for teachers. With the exception of physical education, where the intake was significantly increased the year following the rationalisation of training, throughout the '80s and the early '90s the intakes to teacher education courses were reducing or, at best, fluctuating. Whereas the opportunity might have been taken through STEAC to rationalise provision, the retention of all campuses meant the steady erosion of the academic base of the institutions, with the number of specialists in some areas reduced to one or two staff, while the number of students in the different secondary subjects were sprinkled uneconomically across the system. Even the modest rationalisation of PGCE (Secondary) training made possible by the Dundee/Aberdeen merger was partly off-set by the decision to introduce PGCE (Secondary) provision at Craigie. The new context continued the colleges' dependence on a fluctuating market and little opportunity for diversification was allowed. It was hardly surprising that one commentator should describe the colleges in the post-STEAC years as remaining "weak and vulnerable institutions" (Humes, 1986), and another found them "as exposed as Spartan babies".⁷

Moreover, STEAC's inconclusiveness ensured that the issue of institutional roles and functions would reassert itself. STEAC's commitment to the monotechnic principle meant that the Education Department of the University of Stirling was anomalous. Accordingly, to show some semblance of logical consistency, it was recommended that provision at Stirling should be reviewed. The subsequent review, published in 1988, could not have commended the Stirling Department more warmly. It concluded,

"The evidence of our review showed that the Department of Education at the University of Stirling produces well-trained, enthusiastic probationer teachers; provides highly regarded, innovative in-service training courses; and has undertaken valuable classroom-based research ... Overall, the Department makes a considerable contribution to the quality of teaching, both in its immediate vicinity and throughout the country as a whole." (SED, 1988)

A conclusion of that kind was bound to raise again questions about the most appropriate institutional context for teacher education.

The future of monotechnics was also raised by the publication of a polemic by Bill Turmeau of Napier Polytechnic. In a plan intended "to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education in Scotland", the author proposed "the reduction in the number of autonomous and individual institutions offering courses in higher education from the existing twenty-five to, at most, ten". (Turmeau, 1988) Since twenty of Scotland's twenty-five HEIs did not meet Turmeau's criterion of viability (5,000 FTE), there was a need for widespread institutional amalgamations. Despite the fact that it was dismissed by one principal as "risible" (Cuming, 1989), by a second as "tendentious rubbish"⁸, and by a third as "logically and organisationally incoherent" (Kirk, 1989), it was a strategy for territorial aggrandisement that had to be taken seriously, not least because its protagonist was a member of the Board of Governors of Moray House. However, Turmeau was not alone in sustaining a climate of "mergermania". In the address to the principals of the centrally-funded colleges already referred to, Michael Forsyth devoted a substantial section to "institutional collaboration", making specific reference to mergers involving colleges of education. Then, in November 1991 the UFC Scottish Committee produced a report on the

criteria for assessing merger proposals in higher education. It singled out teacher education for specific mention, asserting that “the Committee does not see any positive advantages in colleges of education remaining essentially monotechnic institutions”. (Universities’ Funding Council, 1991) Finally, John Arbuthnott, then Convener of COSHEP, publicly declared that the difficulties facing higher education

“were particularly acute in Scotland’s smaller higher education colleges. With more cuts to come there was a danger that some of these colleges would have to sacrifice their autonomy and merge with a bigger institution.”⁹

The prevailing insecurity was intensified by the threatened demise of the CNAA. Once the polytechnics won their independence from local authority control and were established as autonomous HEIs in the legislation of 1988, it was predictable, even before the review of CNAA was established in 1990, that they would seek powers to award their own degrees. It was clear that, since the polytechnics accounted for about 85% of CNAA’s work, there would be little room for a body like CNAA once the polytechnics became degree-awarding bodies. Consequently, it was very likely that the public sector HEIs with the authority to award degrees would validate the work of the smaller colleges. That could well be the prelude to the incorporation by the larger central institutions of their smaller neighbours, which would thereby be permanently locked into the non-university sector. Certainly, the SED appeared strongly committed to the creation of such a sector. It was for this reason that it worked hard to bring into being and strongly supported the Conference of Scottish Centrally-funded Colleges, a mechanism which both affirmed SED control and reinforced the separation of these institutions from the universities.

THE 1992 SETTLEMENT

The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act of 1992, by repatriating the Scottish universities and enabling the larger CIs to achieve university status, established a unified structure for Scottish higher education based on the universities and created a context in which mergers were made more rather than less likely. All institutions came to have the same constitutional standing with regard to SHEFC; they were subject to the same funding regime; and they were exposed to the same procedures for assessing the quality of their teaching and for the evaluation of their research. Through the creation of the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals (COSHEP), the principals began to interact more frequently and in that intensification of interaction some of their misconceptions and stereotypes of the past were discarded. SHEFC sought to support a culture of collaboration by allocating substantial sums, through its Strategic Change initiative, to enable institutions to manage the financial and other costs of creating academic alliances that would have the effect of strengthening higher education in Scotland as a whole. Apart from the early mergers involving Jordanhill with the University of Strathclyde and Craigie with the University of Paisley, Queen’s College and Glasgow Polytechnic joined to create Glasgow Caledonian University; Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art became part of the University of Dundee; and the Scottish College of Textiles sought merger with Heriot-Watt University. In such a climate, it would have been remarkable if the three remaining autonomous colleges of education had not been persuaded that their future, too, lay in incorporation within a university.

INTENSIFYING FINANCIAL PRESSURES

While institutions of higher education have been required in recent years to operate within increasingly tight financial constraints, for the autonomous teacher education institutions the financial environment throughout the ’90s became increasingly

hostile. The progressive reduction in student numbers, combined with SHEFC's formula-based allocation model, created formidable difficulties. In order to keep the level of grant reduction within manageable proportions, the three colleges concerned had to be "safety-netted". That did not enamour them to the other institutions and there were mutterings to the effect that the money used for "safety-netting" was a "tax on the other institutions". References were made in otherwise collegial discussions in COSHEP circles to those smaller institutions which "expensively, go it alone". Under pressure to reduce the proportion of funds that was top-sliced, SHEFC intimated that "safety-netting" would be withdrawn and required the institutions affected to develop a strategy under which their reliance on "safety-net" funds would be ended. The outcome was a pattern of income reduction from SHEFC as follows:

	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
Moray House	-1.0%	-2.6%	-5.3%
Northern	-1.0%	-2.3%	-6.1%
St Andrew's	-1.0%	-4.6%	-0.8%

When it is acknowledged that that cumulative reduction did not take account of inflation of the order of 2%-2.5%, the severity of the financial problems facing the colleges becomes apparent.

That reduction in grant from SHEFC was paralleled by a drop in income from other sources. Throughout the '80s the colleges of education enjoyed a specific staffing allowance for in-service work to the extent of some 200 staff across the sector. Progressively, the funds to sustain such staff were transferred to education authorities, who were then in a position to buy in-service work from the colleges. When authorities were permitted to seek in-service support from other quarters and with the loss of specific grant for in-service work, the colleges suffered a significant drop in income.

In the face of such difficulties, the colleges sought each year to remain in surplus, but only by the imposition of the most stringent budgetary controls. That was damaging in two ways: firstly, it affected the morale of resourceful and committed staff, who interpreted each successive cut and each new financial pressure as an expression of the community's lack of confidence in their work; secondly, it meant that a disproportionate amount of the total institutional effort was devoted to the scrutiny of financial performance and the maintenance of the institution's financial viability. Faced with the prospect of even gloomier financial scenarios, institutions were bound to question whether the price of institutional autonomy and independence was a price worth paying. More positively, institutions were able to see that merger offered significant scope for economies of scale and efficiencies - in teaching, in the provision of services to support teaching and learning, in the management of estates, and in other ways. Could it be right to stand in the way of such efficiencies and economies, especially when these appeared to constitute the essential means of protecting the quality of the work of the institution?

THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF MERGER

While these features of the higher education context clearly exerted pressure on the colleges to seek merger with a university, such overtures would surely require to be supported by a rationale which demonstrated an appreciation of the educational benefits of merger, if only because SHEFC expected precisely such a rationale. Not surprisingly, the merger documentation is replete with claims of this kind:

“The driving force for closer association of Jordanhill College and Strathclyde University is the potential to realise academic advances and to enhance the quality of educational provision.” (Jordanhill/Strathclyde)¹⁰

“The merger of Craigie and the University of Paisley is being proposed fundamentally for academic reasons.” (Craigie/Paisley)¹¹

“... The fundamental objective of the proposed merger is to maximise the academic benefits of bringing together the activities of Moray House Institute of Education with those of the University of Edinburgh.” (Moray House/Edinburgh)¹²

“The University will create a Faculty of Education which, through its leadership, ethos and structure, will develop an environment in which excellence in teaching, research and development will be enhanced.” (St Andrew’s/Glasgow)¹³

“The over-riding objective of the whole process is to embed teacher education and the other disciplines in Northern College within a multi-faculty university environment, both in Aberdeen and in Dundee.” (Northern College/Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee)¹⁴

These general statements were reinforced by more specific claims about the advantages which merger with a university was thought to confer:

The merger would enhance “the education of teachers and kindred professions through a strengthening of the academic underpinning of their education, giving them a deeper and broader cognitive base from which to draw in their work and supported by a framework for continuing professional development”. (Moray House/Edinburgh)

There was a need to avoid “the obvious possibility that, as years went by, Scottish teachers who had been trained in a college rather than a university might be regarded as inferior in other parts of the world.” (Arbuthnott and Bone, 1993)

“As a result of the merger, the academic experience of all students in the merged institution will be enriched ... Their range of social contacts will increase as they form part of a wider community of students drawn from a variety of backgrounds and cultures.” (Glasgow/St Andrew’s)

Merger will allow “access to academic courses offered elsewhere in the University, thereby providing flexibility and diversity in terms of entry/exit points and alternative career pathways.” (Northern/Aberdeen and Dundee Universities)

Members of staff will see themselves “part of a broadly based university within which there will be facilities for staff to extend and deepen their experience and enhanced opportunities for in-house staff development”. (Craigie/Paisley)

Finally, there was a general acknowledgement in all of the documents that merger with a university would significantly strengthen research activity, in some cases by arranging for researchers and other educational specialists from the host university to join the new faculties in order to create significant concentrations of expertise that should strengthen the research profile and output of these faculties and lead to the creation in each of a healthy research culture. Indeed, in three cases, Moray House/Edinburgh, Northern College/Aberdeen/ Dundee, and St Andrew’s/ Glasgow,

there is a bold declaration of the target rating sought in subsequent Research Assessment Exercises.

Such confident affirmations of the value of merger with universities contrast strikingly with the evidence submitted by the colleges and their principals to the STEAC review. With the exception of Jordanhill, which, following its principal's lead, favoured the establishment of the colleges as faculties of educational studies in the universities, the colleges had stridently defended their independent existence. The cynic might argue that this volte-face is an illustration of how educational rhetoric can be varied to justify institutional self-interest, and that it was necessary to disguise the real motives for merger - which were financial - in language that might impress a funding council which expected proposals to be academically driven. On that view, the colleges and their principals displayed a regrettable lack of vision in the mid-80s: the change of heart is not to be interpreted as the belated recognition of the validity of the educational arguments for merger - these were as valid in the mid-80s as in the mid-90s - but, rather, as acquiescence in pressures which threatened the colleges' viability.

There is room for an alternative explanation. Leaving aside the attitude of the universities to merger in the mid-80s - there is no evidence that that would have been positive and some evidence, indeed, that it would have been negative¹⁵ - in the STEAC review colleges vigorously maintained that the professional orientation to their work would be eroded if responsibility for teacher education passed to the universities. In each case, the merger discussions have shown that, if that fear was justified in the mid-'80s, it is now groundless. The universities see themselves as places of "useful learning", to invoke the University of Strathclyde declaration: all of them are major centres of professional education and are well capable of accommodating the professional demands and forms of professional scrutiny which are associated with the education of teachers. It would also be fair to say that, in the decade following STEAC, there has been a significant movement of professional opinion, and that was reflected in the Sutherland Report, compiled on behalf of the Dearing/Garrick Committee. It read:

"On academic grounds, I believe that the proposals that I have put forward ... point, inevitably, towards the provision of teacher education within a broader intellectual context than can be provided by a monotechnic. ... There are also strong arguments that the student experience in Scotland is likely to be enhanced through being educated in a broader HE context and, indeed, that the staff experience will be strengthened through contact with, or integration into, the research environment of a university." (Sutherland Report, 1997)

THE RESPONSE OF THE UNIVERSITIES

Of course, the mergers could not have been effected without the positive support and involvement of the universities. The merger documents all demonstrate that, for their part, the universities saw significant advantages flowing from merger with a college of education. Given their commitment to enhance the quality of their teaching, it was advantageous to incorporate a substantial group of staff with a pronounced professional allegiance to and expertise in teaching and support for students' learning. Through the new faculties of education universities would be able to establish closer links with schools and other educational agencies, make a stronger contribution to the initial and continuing education of teachers, and, through that, play an even stronger role in the revitalisation of the work of the education service. Moreover, the establishment of faculties of education would provide a convenient context for a range of educational groups already in the university, for example, the Institute for the Study of Education and Society, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Centre,

the Centre for Communication Aids for Language and Learning, and the Centre for Mathematical Education at Edinburgh; the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, the Teaching and Learning Service, and the Centre for Science Education at Glasgow; the Centre for Continuing Education and the Department of Educational Studies at Dundee; and the Centre for Educational Research at Aberdeen. That rationalisation within and between institutions was seen as a way of creating a strong concentration of expertise in education and a critical mass of specialists capable of generating work of high quality.

No doubt the positive response of the universities was influenced by the significant developments that had taken place in the colleges of education over the years: by the beginning of the '90s all their students were on degree courses; they were extending their postgraduate provision significantly; they were major centres of consultancy and support for practising professionals; and they were developing their research profiles. Of course, the level of research activity was below university expectations and that explains the prominence in the merger documentation of the academic plans for the development of research in the new faculties.

Finally, the repatriation of the Scottish universities created an entirely new context. Universities see themselves as members of an international community of scholarship. However, they also have strong roots in their local communities. The creation of faculties of education gave the universities a further way of affirming their commitment to these local communities and to the educational life of Scotland. And, of course, that commitment has been reinforced by the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, which carries responsibility for the whole educational service, including the universities, and which creates a context in which the contribution of the universities to all aspects of the life of Scotland can be enhanced.

INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Since government policy was that mergers should originate within the institutions, it was inevitable that principals and their senior colleagues would engage in exploratory discussions on a confidential basis before emerging with proposals for wider discussion. There were those who found this approach inappropriate. For example, Jack Dale, Further and Higher Education Secretary of the EIS, was particularly exasperated, claiming that "this free-for-all restructuring of higher education in Scotland must be brought under some kind of control ... Colleges are not private companies to be traded in the market-place and were not at the personal disposal of their principals."¹⁶ These concerns were not entirely justified. Principals had an obligation to initiate discussions. However, their proposals had to win the support of students and of staff, of governing bodies, of academic boards and senates, of the Mergers Committee of SHEFC, and, ultimately, of the Secretary of State. Every merger proposal is also required to include an option appraisal, a detailed analysis of the proposal in relation to a number of plausible alternatives against a common set of criteria. Only robust proposals could survive that attenuated process of critical scrutiny.

Of course, given the complexity and seriousness of the issues, it was not to be expected that discussions would be straightforward: in each case, the evidence is clear, negotiations were protracted and time-consuming and serious difficulties were encountered: continuity of employment for staff; transitional arrangements for students; the impact on universities' research ratings; the financial arrangements; the protection of the professional work of the colleges; the disposal of estate; and new departmental structures. What is remarkable is the degree of consensus each merger proposal generated within the collaborating institutions and in subsequent formal scrutiny by the Funding Council and the Secretary of State.

CONCLUSION

The regulated market which the Conservative government created for higher education in the late '80s also created the conditions in which institutional collaboration could develop in terms acceptable to the institutions themselves. Two sets of forces can be seen at work. On the one hand, the colleges of education were at the mercy of fluctuating demands for teachers; they had little or no scope for diversification; their funding base was shrinking; and they were under heavy pressure to enhance the quality of their teaching and research. Belatedly, and perhaps as a direct response to their vulnerability, they came to appreciate the positive benefits of merger with a university. For their part, the universities came to appreciate the benefits of establishing faculties of education through which they could rationalise their existing educational provision, and affirm that, while operating on an international stage, they were integral parts of the Scottish educational system and were committed to its revitalisation. The recognition of reciprocal benefits, which is a pre-condition of collaborative partnership in education as in other spheres, made mergers likely, if not inevitable.

The *passing* of Scotland's monotronics is a deliberately neutral term. The early college closures were a source of deep bitterness and were perceived as acts of ministerial vandalism, the deliberate killing of academic communities. On that analogy, the mergers of the '90s might be characterised as cases of assisted suicide: the institutions willed their own demise but they were aided and abetted by policies which induced the urge to self-destruction and facilitated the final act. That may be stretching a metaphor too far. What matters, surely, is that the colleges of education have earned full membership of the university community; that their important work of educating and providing professional support for teachers and related professionals is now located in a richer, a more secure, and a more challenging environment; that the professional values underpinning their work have been endorsed and protected; and that the universities themselves, as they acknowledge, are among the principal beneficiaries.

NOTES

- ¹ Professor John Shaw, Chairman of the Scottish Committee of the Universities' Funding Council, in a letter to the Secretary of State accompanying the report, *Criteria for assessing merger proposals from institutions of higher education in Scotland*, November 1991.
- ² Minister's speech to the Conference of Centrally-funded Colleges, May 1989, Dunblane.
- ³ Minute of Senate of the University of Glasgow, 16 May 1991.
- ⁴ STEAC, Minute of meeting held on 12 July 1995, paragraph 18.
- ⁵ STEAC, Minute of meeting held on 29 July 1985, paragraph 25.
- ⁶ *Hansard*, 17 July 1986, column 1187.
- ⁷ Editorial in *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland*, 15.9.89.
- ⁸ Donald Leach, Principal of Queen Margaret College, quoted in *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland*, 25.10.88.
- ⁹ *The Scotsman*, 22 June 1995, page 6.
- ¹⁰ Final Report of Strathclyde University/Jordanhill College Joint Working Party to consider the feasibility of a merger of the two institutions, January 1992, page 8.
- ¹¹ Proposal for the merger of the two institutions (Craigie/Paisley), June 1992 draft, pages 10, 11 and 14.
- ¹² *A Proposal for Merger*, (1998), University of Edinburgh/Moray House Institute of Education, pages 1 and 7.
- ¹³ Merger Proposal, The University of Glasgow/St Andrew's College, February 1998, Executive Summary.
- ¹⁴ Merger of Northern College with the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee, April 1999, pages 10 and 11.

¹⁵ For example, in a personal communication Tom Bone, former Principal of Jordanhill College of Education, disclosed that at the time of the STEAC review Principal Alwyn Williams of the University of Glasgow stated that, while he himself believed that colleges of education should become faculties of education of universities, he did not believe that the Senate of the University of Glasgow shared that view.

¹⁶ Jack Dale, Further and Higher Education Secretary of the EIS, quoted in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 14 July 1989.

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